

The determining cause of the accumulation of so much moraine matter at the particular spot, Thājwaz, no doubt was the narrow gorge below, which made the ice of the side glacier (in an intermediate later time, when the main-valley glacier had retreated as far back as Sonāmarg or farther, and so the two had separated) to accumulate, to abut perhaps against the opposite mountain, and, keeping long at that level, to shed the material it carried, some being borne away down the gorge, while that thrown off on the upper side has remained to this day.* 133^x

The village of Sonāmarg, a couple of miles above Thājwaz, has but half a dozen houses; it is with difficulty kept inhabited, for the cloudiness and showery character of its climate combined with the altitude, 8600 feet, make the growth of all crops precarious. The Maharaja's Government gives some advantages to those who will settle here, for the sake of their aid in carrying the post to Ladākh across the Pass; for this is the last inhabited spot in the Sind Valley; no other house is met with until we are beyond the Pass, in the Drās country. 361 [132] [241] [205]

At Sonāmarg we no longer have the homely look of the Kashmir village; here no trees shelter the cottages, the plain is bare, and the fields look unpromising. But the mountains that face the village on the north attract our attention; here beds of greyish-blue limestone stand up perfectly vertical and make precipitous slab-like faces of rock across the higher parts of the spurs. 133^x

From Sonāmarg to Bāltal the valley is immediately bounded by hills a few thousand feet high; on the north side they are covered only with grass; on the south they are varied with tracts of forest. In some places the fir wood spreads down to the part traversed by the road; when we get to Bāltal the plain again is bare, but some of the lower hill-slopes are covered with birch wood and firs.

Bāltal is the last halting-place before the Pass. Here the main stream of the Sind River turns off almost at right angles

* On the steep side of the mountain on the right bank of the main river (above the bridge) I observed glacier-scratches at a height of about 500 feet above

The only railway at present is a short length of 16 miles, constructed at the cost of the State, which is included in a branch of the North-Western State Railway from Wazirābād through Siālkot. It cost 9.6 lakhs, and has usually earned a net profit of 1 to 2½ per cent., in addition to the rebate allowed from traffic exchanged with the North-Western Railway. A line has been surveyed along the Jhelum valley route, and it is proposed to work this by electricity derived from the river.

The State is included for postal purposes in the circle administered by the Postmaster-General of the Punjab and North-West Frontier Province. Formerly Kashmir had its own postal service and used its own postage stamps, but as far back as 1876 there were British post offices in Srinagar and Leh. The State stamps were used only for local purposes, and letters and other postal articles passing between the State post offices and British India were charged with both Kashmir and Indian postage. In 1894 the State posts were entirely amalgamated with the Indian postal system. The following statistics show the advance in postal business since 1880-1 :—

	1880-1.	1890-1.	1900-1.	1904-5.
Number of post offices . .	2	2	81	78
Number of letter boxes . .	...	...	199	207
Number of miles of postal communication . .	...	...	1,588	1,678
Total number of postal articles delivered :—				
Letters	48,126	138,216	1,414,140	1,519,674
Postcards	3,406	26,858	1,209,182	1,639,430
Packets	832	16,146	96,356*	166,400
Newspapers	42,978	70,226	193,414†	246,974
Parcels	1,742	4,914	32,786	77,402
Value of stamps sold to the public Rs.	†	†	81,030	1,06,028
Value of money orders issued Rs.	†	†	3,10,591	16,37,787

* Including unregistered newspapers.
† The figures are included in those of the Punjab.

† Registered as newspapers in the Punjab.

Famine.

The accounts of early famines are vague, but it is known that they occurred. While Sher Singh was governor (1831-3) severe distress was felt and many people fled, but the next governor, Miān Singh, did much to restore prosperity by importing grain. It is said that the population was reduced to a quarter in that famine. In 1877-9 a worse disaster was experienced and the loss of life was enormous. Famines in Kashmir are not caused by drought, as in India, because the

1889]

A FORTNIGHT'S WORK

175

Lastly, Government had sanctioned Robertson's Kafiristan scheme, my visiting Dir and Bajour, and my returning to India by that road if possible. I was promised full instructions as to the terms I might make with Umra Khan. All this, coupled with the fact that the best part of our personal stores and furniture had not arrived, that I had to try and find out where they had stuck, and to arrange for their being pushed on, ensured one's being busy. There was no telegraph line to Gilgit in those days, a thing for which I was, as a rule, most devoutly thankful, but which at this moment was inconvenient, for it took ten days or so to get a letter to Kashmir by ordinary post. There was an urgent post which was supposed to go night and day, the services of which were secured by the simple process of putting the important letter into a red bag, but knowing the hopeless condition of the mail service, and the paucity of runners, I did not like to make too free use of this. 000 205

Having roughed out my various plans, and got things more or less into working order, I started for my second visit to Chitral in the middle of September, with the intention of returning to Gilgit in a couple of months, either by Dir Bajour and India, or by the direct route, as circumstances might permit. Younghusband was to be in Hunza by the middle of November, and I meant to be in Gilgit at the time in case he wanted help. 000

The first day brought difficulty. The native surveyor, a Mahomedan, whom we had brought up from India, and whom I had left doing some work in Hunza and Nagar, rejoined my camp, and at once came and protested against going into Kafiristan

487 Pir Panjal route. In the reign of Maharaja Ranbir Singh, visitors generally used this way. It had been the favourite route of the Mughal emperors and nobles, and the remnants of the Mughal *sarais* are still to be met with almost at every halting place. The nearest railway station for this route is Gujrat. The distance from Gujrat to Bhimber, which was about thirty miles, could be covered by cart. From Bhimber, Srinagar could be reached in 12 marches of 10 to 15 miles each. The high Pir Panjal range had to be crossed on this route. Thana Mandi lay at a distance of 70 miles from Bhimber. A traveller could take the Poonch route from Thana Mandi and complete the journey in 8 marches by way of Uri. This was, however, difficult and not much favoured.

491 It will thus be seen that the construction of the two roads connecting the Punjab with Srinagar was no mean achievement. Lakhs of rupees were spent on the *pucca* bridle road to Gilgit. Another bridle road connected Srinagar with Leh in Ladakh. Considerable expenditure was incurred on the maintenance and repairs of these roads, all of which passed through difficult mountainous countries. In 1894, the postal service of the State was amalgamated with the imperial service, and in 1897, 205 648 His Highness' Government entered into an agreement for exchange of services between the State and the Imperial telegraph systems.

651 In 1887, His late Highness requisitioned the services of a British Officer from the Government of India for the purpose of land settlement. But the real credit for the settlement must go to Mr. (afterwards Sir) Walter Lawrence, who was appointed Settlement Commissioner in 1889, and who brought great sympathy and understanding to bear on his task. The first settlements in Jammu and Kashmir were completed in seven years. The settlement of Astore and Gilgit was completed in 1894. The main features of Mr. Lawrence's work which had the complete approval of His late Highness and the State Council were:—

- (a) The State demand was fixed for 10 years.
- (b) As a first step towards substitution of payment in cash for payment in kind, the proportion of the latter was so fixed as to cause the least hardship to the cultivators and maintain the confidence of the city population.